



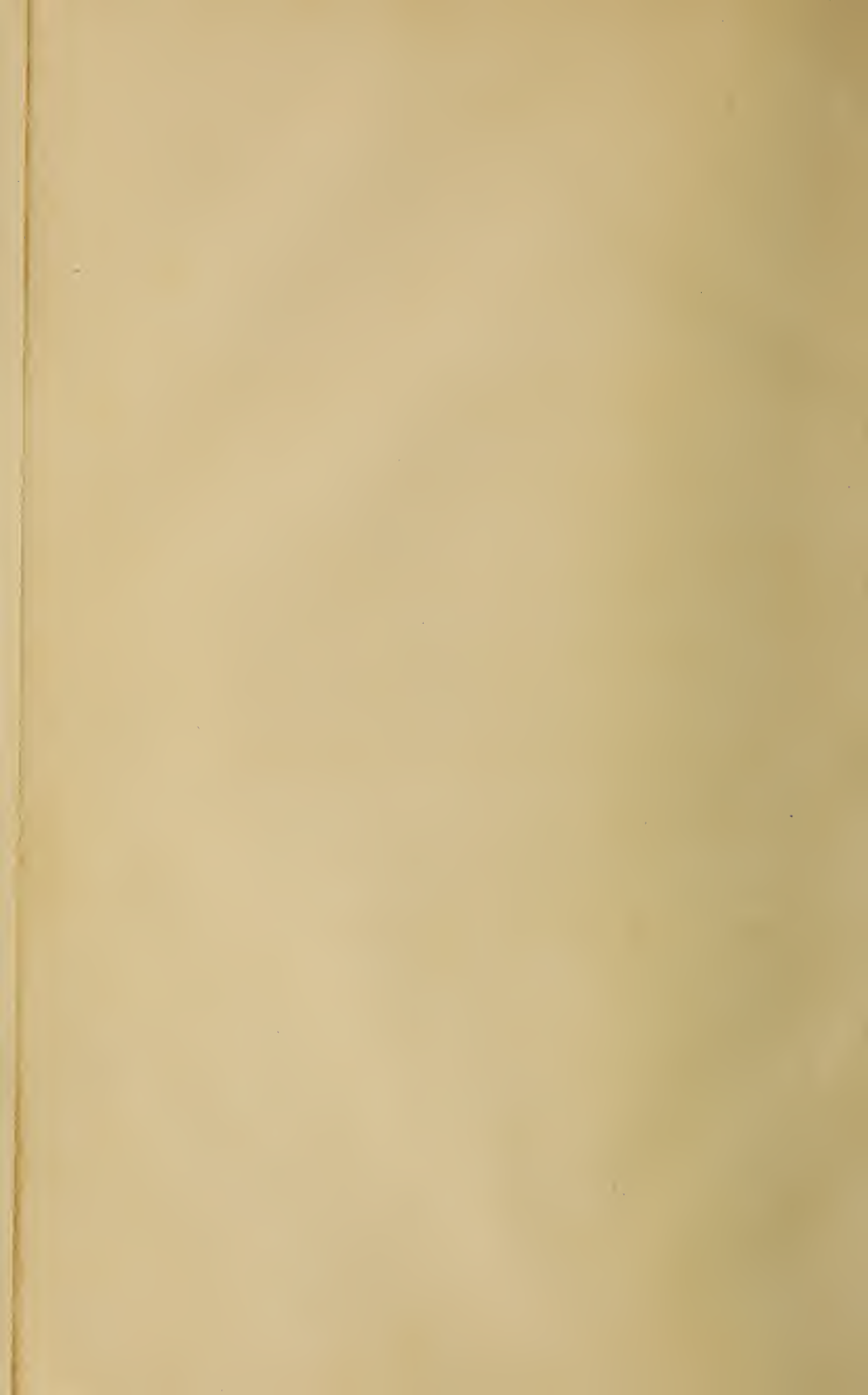
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ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT NIAGARA FALLS,

ON THE EVENING OF THE

TWENTY-NINTH OF DECEMBER, 1838.

THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE

BURNING OF THE CAROLINE

BY

THOMAS L. NICHOLS.

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BUFFALO:

PRINTED BY CHARLES FAXON,

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1839.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

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*Niagara Falls, Dec. 29, 1838.*

DEAR SIR—At the meeting of this evening, the undersigned were appointed a Committee, to solicit of you, a copy of your Address for publication ; in discharge of which duty they would request its publication, in such form and manner as may be most agreeable to you.

Respectfully your Obed't Serv'ts,

C. H. SMITH,  
T. G. HULETT,  
THOS. W. FANNING.

THOS. L. NICHOLS, Esq. Ed. Mercury & Buffalonian.

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*Buffalo, Jan. 1, 1839.*

GENTLEMEN—Hoping, that in granting the flattering request of the highly respectable meeting, of which you are the representatives, I shall do my mite in advancing the cause in which we are engaged, I will take the earliest opportunity of laying before you, in an enduring form, the Address, which, though a hasty effort, your partiality has seen fit to approve.

Trusting that the voice of public opinion will stimulate our government to such action, as may render another similar celebration of the Caroline outrage unnecessary ;

I have the honor to be, Gentlemen,

With the highest esteem,

Your humble Servant,

THOS. L. NICHOLS.

C. H. SMITH,  
T. G. HULETT,  
THOS. W. FANNING, Esqs. } Committee.

## ADDRESS.

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FELLOW CITIZENS :—An unpracticed speaker stands before you, conscious of his inability, and trusting only to the time, the place and the circumstances for eloquence and inspiration ; and hoping only that he may be able to impress you with the same feelings which these circumstances have produced upon himself.

One year ago to night—a year so quickly fled, that its events seem to have transpired yesterday, this vicinity was the scene of one of those occurrences in our national history, which stand out in bold relief, and will never be forgotten. A short distance above us, the watch-fires of war were gleaming from yonder dark, wood covered Island, for brave spirits had gathered there—sentinels were pacing from gun to gun, and fire to fire—and over their heads, the newly raised flag of Liberty flapped heavily in the breeze—that flag under which so many brave and gallant men have since fallen on fields of imperishable glory.

On the other side waved the proud flag of Britain—a flag which has floated in glory over an hundred battle fields, but never raised in the western world but to be disgraced, and that night to be most foully tarnished. In the camp at midnight, there was the hum of preparation. Officer whispered to officer—men talked low with men, and there was hurrying to and fro, and arms and armor preparing, as for a fight. Where was the object of British valor ? What armed foe were they about to meet—to conquer, or die upon the battle field ? Was it to make an assault upon the brave little band, who had raised the twin-starred flag on British ground and dared Britain's power ? Were they arming for the perilous assault ? No. That would have been a brave and noble action—and if they had done it, we should have admired and honored their valor, even if we wept our brothers slain and their cause defeated. Far different was the object of that midnight expedition, whose scenes of blood and outrage we have met to solemnly commemorate.

The broad, deep current of the Niagara calmly glided on toward the great cataract, whose low thunders are now sounding in our ears—vibrating the air around us and making the earth tremble beneath our feet. At the wharf at Schlosser, moored in peaceful quietness, reposing upon the starlit waters, lay the CAROLINE. All was hushed about her. Her little crew had retired to their berths, secure of the protection of their native soil, and their country's flag. Strangers too, were sleeping there, for that night the Caroline was the home of hospitality, and the unhoused wanderer found shelter and repose. A single watch paced lazily upon the deck, nor dreamed of danger. He looked upon the dark waters that were gliding past him, the stars that shone dimly in the wintry sky, the gleaming watch-fires of the Patriot Army, and peering through the gloom watched for a moment the lights upon the distant shore, and then, musing, perhaps, the while, on his home and loved ones, he listened to the music of the cataract, whose deep diapason broke heavily upon the stillness of the night.

Boats filled with armed men have left the British shore, and with muffled oars are approaching. The watch perceives them not. No alarm is given, and had it been, it were useless; for they were unarmed,—and not expecting nor prepared for danger.—During the day the boat had plied as a ferry boat, and carried men, who from motives of business or curiosity chose to visit the adjacent island. She was an American boat, owned and sailed by American citizens, and carrying an American flag. She was neither bought, nor chartered, nor hired by any party. Her owner, a citizen of Buffalo, cleared her for the express business in which she was engaged, and she had a regular license. Why then should she fear—or wherefore should her crew be armed, or on the watch to defend her? Thank Heaven, our country's flag has ever been deemed a sufficient protection to her citizens.

But now the boats have neared our shores—hushed is every sound—and even the blocks of ice which grato against each other, seem to make a harsher noise, in the stillness of that scene. The boats float down and the prow of the foremost dashes against the vessel's side. The challenge of the sentinel is too late. The armed myrmidons of British power spring upon the vessel's deck, the alarm is given, and the work of death commences. Men were roused from their quiet beds—and the first sounds that met their



ears were the soldiers' oaths—the sharp fire of pistols—the sabres clang, and the British watchword—"Give the d——d rebels no quarters." All was confusion, terror, and blood. Durfee had sprung upon the wharf, and had almost escaped, when a bullet pierced his brain, and with a single groan he fell dead. Others escaped with severe wounds—and others, more fortunate, got away unhurt. The records of Eternity alone can tell how many were murdered. One was left dead upon our shores—a citizen of Buffalo—a harmless, unarmed man, whose only offence was that he slept that night on board the *Caroline*. The British boast of six or seven their valor slew, and it is certain that many have been missing from that night of outrage and blood.

The scene did not end here. When the boat's crew were all escaped or murdered—or perchance concealed in her, she was cut loose, towed into the stream and set on fire, and a signal light was seen on the British shore to guide the boats on their return from their expedition. The scene now became one of awful sublimity. The *Caroline* was in flames, and the resistless flood was bearing her on toward the cataract. As the fires curled about her, her engine began to work by the heat of the burning vessel, and the pitchy flames threw a red glare on the wild scenery around her. It showed the wintry forest, and glowed upon the waters—it revealed the rebel island, and the barracks of the British soldiers, and showed too, the ghastly corpse and clotted gore of the murdered Durfee.

Amid the wild grandeur of this scene, shouts of triumph came from the other shore. The midnight murderers had returned from their piratical expedition, with two innocent boys as prisoners—but no arms nor trophies—there were none to take.

Onward the burning vessel was borne, and nearer and nearer the mighty precipice. From one side she was viewed with exultation—from the other, with deep threats of vengeance; and as she neared the foaming gulf—the hell of waters—they tell of dark forms that were seen amid the flames—and of death shrieks, that rose shrill and piercing above the noise of the rushing waters.—Still she rushed on, and still the scene increased in grandeur until her burning timbers were extinguished in the flood, and a few blackened fragments, thrown upon the shore, were all that remained of the *Caroline*.

Such were the scenes of the night upon whose anniversary we are assembled—assembled to assert our rights which were then so brutally violated, and which, in the language of the resolution in accordance with which this meeting was convened “have neither been *atoned for, avenged, nor forgotten.*”

Such was the scene and such the circumstances of the destruction of the Caroline. At first the British commandant was struck with terror at the barefaced atrocity of the deed. He tried to throw the odium of it upon others. He expressed his sorrow, and offered to pay for the boat, out of his private purse. A council was held. They found the act must either be recognized by the government, or the individuals engaged in it given up to be tried for murder. The worthless lives of McNab, Drew, Usher, and their comrades, weighed against the Honor of the British name, and the outrage was *recognized, avowed, and defended.*

But let us glance for a few moments at the events which preceded this bloody outrage and the scenes which have since transpired. They are full of interest, and in future times will be looked upon as among the most important events in the history of this continent.

Once the colonies of Great Britain, these States rebelled against her power, and our fathers achieved our independence. Since that time revolutions have convulsed the world. France has seen two, and has, at length, settled down under a liberal government—a monarchy but in name. England, at home, is almost as free. Greece has asserted her independence, and one by one the South American States and Mexico, have thrown off the yoke of a foreign government.

In every struggle for liberty on either continent, we have sympathised and aided. We have sent money and munitions and men. Public meetings have been held in our great cities, means collected, and wherever men were contending for freedom, we have cheered them on to victory, and such was our privilege and our duty. On this subject our orators have used the most stirring eloquence—and the capitol at Washington has echoed with the appeals of our greatest statesmen. We have considered it our boon and our birth-right to sympathise with, and fight for the oppressed. It was given us by Washington, La Fayette, Kosciusko, Pulaski, and De Kalb.

A short time since and Texas, now an independent state, rebelled against the new-formed government of Mexico, as Mexico had rebelled against Spain. The sympathies of this nation were roused. Men, money and arms were openly furnished. Victory perched upon their banners at San Jacinto, and Texas is free.—Then men were publicly recruited in the streets of our cities, and the government did not interfere with their operations. Meanwhile, the elements of revolution were ripening in the Canadas. They now remained the sole colonies of European power on the continent, and they, too, began to think of freedom.

Every year their wrongs were growing heavier, and their rights were more and more interfered with by their constantly shifting tribe of office holders, who were sent out by the mother country, whose government seems to be free at home in proportion as it is despotic abroad. Their fairest lands were retained as clergy reserves, to sustain an odious establishment. They were ruled by men in whose election they had no choice, and obliged to submit to measures of which they neither saw the use, nor the necessity.

They compared their country and its institutions to ours, and the comparison was neither flattering to their pride, nor encouraging to their future prospects. They saw us dashing on to national wealth and greatness with gigantic strides—every river and lake covered with our magnificent steamers—our flag floating triumphantly on every sea, and works of internal improvement filling the land from one extremity to the other, and trade and manufactures, and science and civilization marching on with rapid progression. They saw states far beyond them, and with inferior natural advantages outstripping them in population, in wealth and prosperity. They saw our beautiful cities spring up, like magic, in every direction, while their country—formed to be a garden of beauty—was rude, uncultivated, and a century behind the age. They saw us revelling in all the blessings of freedom, while they had but the hollow boast of loyalty, and the poor satisfaction of being a dependency of a powerful nation three thousand miles distant.

For years they brooded over this state of things, and every year their condition grew worse, and their government more oppressive. Yet there were men in both provinces who knew the meaning of liberty, and foresaw that a change must come sooner or later. Papineau and his compatriots in the Lower Province, and Rolphe, Bidwell, Mackenzie, and their associates in the Upper.



These, all, spake boldly in favor of the rights of the People, and defended democratic institutions. For years, at the head of the party called Reformers by their friends, Rebels by the tories and patriots by us, they contended against the dominant, high church, tory party—the far famed family compact whose control was growing every year more and more oppressive.

The story of Canadian wrongs and grievances has been too often repeated, to make it necessary for me to relate them here.—They are those which seem to be inseparable from British colonial government—the same of which our forefathers complained, and in consequence of which they fought and achieved our independence, and formed the glorious constitution under whose broad protection we have this night assembled; and the slightest infringement of which, we are bound to protest against, and, if necessary, *resist* by every means in our power.

The elements of commotion were kept in turmoil. The friends of liberal government were foiled in every effort to accomplish their objects by peaceable means, and at length the rebellion broke out near Toronto. Rashly and without the proper degree of caution or concert, the standard of revolt was raised by Mackenzie. Hundreds of men flocked to it upon the instant—thousands were on their way to join it. They were unarmed and undisciplined it is true, but at that moment Toronto was in their power. Had they then had a man capable of taking advantage of their situation—had they had a Washington, a Warren, a Putnam, the result might have been triumphantly glorious. They had but one military man among them, and he at an early stage of their affairs was shot—I mean Anderson. When action—action—bold, spirited and decisive action was wanted, they vascillated and delayed. The golden opportunity was lost. The tories found time to rally—they saw where the failure was, and took immediate advantage of it. The rebellion was defeated, its leaders fled to exile or were imprisoned. Strong measures were instantly taken.—The people were disarmed and every suspected person was thrown into prison. Some were released after months of cruel confinement—some banished from their native soil, and others, the most undaunted of the brave, were coolly murdered.

Next came the expedition of Navy Island. I need not describe it. You are familiar with its history; and one of the events connected with it—that in which we as American citizens have the



most interest is that which I have already described—the burning of the Caroline.

I shall not discuss the competency of the officers who had the direction of that affair, nor point out the causes of its failure, but I will say that a set of braver spirits never trod the earth, or bore with more unflinching fortitude the inclemency of a northern winter, almost unprovided as they were, than the patriots who occupied Navy Island. Whatever the officers may have been, the men were true as steel. There are not recorded on the pages of history acts of nobler daring than were there performed, by those, whom a certain class of our fellow citizens chose to stigmatise as loafers and vagabonds. I will give one instance. When the British batteries were throwing shot and shell incessantly upon the Island, a man was sitting in a little log cabin, busily making cartridges. Men were sleeping in cots around him. Powder and cartridges were lying all about the room in pans and baskets, when a shell, with its fuse hissing fire, fell through the roof into the middle of the apartment. In a moment it would have burst and scattered destruction and death around it. The brave fellow, with a coolness and interpidity, never enough to be lauded, seized the engine of distruction—hurled it out of the window, where it exploded at a safe distance, and then quietly resumed his employment. This is but a single instance among a hundred similar ones of personal bravery.

When the army disbanded and came upon our shores, a spirit of perseverance was shown worthy of the most chivalric ages. Instead of departing to their homes and firesides, these men who had sworn to fight in the cause of liberty, and to avenge the Caroline, in the dead of winter, at its most inclement season, commenced a journey of four hundred miles around Lake Erie, sustained only by the love of liberty and the charity of the friends of freedom. They met at Point au Pellaé, and their heroism in that fight has never yet, to my knowledge, been recorded. They need a tongue of more eloquence, a pen of more fire than mine, to do justice to their bravery.

They were but few in numbers, but the spirit that glowed in the hearts of our fathers of the Revolution animated them. They met the enemy, who were greatly their superiors in numbers.—They coolly stood an engagement, receiving and returning

several rounds, when the British made their charge. During the whole action, the voice of their Commander had been heard above the rattle of musketry, "Steady boys! steady!" and now they reserved their fire until the foe were just upon them. At the word a sheet of fire met the foe and stopped them in their full career. Their line was broken and through it the little band of Patriots made good their retreat. Between thirty and forty British soldiers fell in that day's fight, and six or seven of their opponents.

Lount and Matthews had been taken prisoners. They were two brave, heroic men—men of family, influence and fortune.—The mockery of a trial was gone through with. They were sentenced to death. One had a wife and nine children. He was universally esteemed and respected, and scarcely a man in all Canada believed he would be executed. They did not dream of such a bloody act of tyranny—of murder. The day approached and no reprieve was granted. Men began to fear the result. Petitions were circulated and signed by thousands. Yet, when they were presented by the wife of one of the prisoners, who pleaded for her husband's life upon her knees, in all the agony of woman's grief—with all the eloquence of woman's prayers, she was coldly, brutally repulsed, and her petition, and that of a whole people disregarded. The day of execution came and Lount and Matthews perished on a gibbet—martyrs to liberty.

In the Summer another disastrous rebellion—that at Short Hills—ended as fatally, and Moreau was added to the list.

In the Lower Province there had been a more extensive rebellion, and a more sanguinary exhibition of British cruelty. Villages were laid in ashes—and the jails were filled with victims. Men were inhumanly butchered, or illegally banished. But each exile was

Yet happier so than if he trod  
His own belov'd but blighted sod,  
Beneath a despot stranger's nod!  
Oh! he would rather houseless roam  
Where freedom and his God may lead,  
Than be the sleekest slave at home  
That crouches to the tyrants creed.

In all these scenes our people sympathised with the patriotic and oppressed, as what people with one spark of generous feeling would not? The people of England sympathised with them, and

boldly expressed their sympathies, and their indignation at the acts of their government. Witness, their public meetings, their speeches, and their resolutions. The French nation sympathized with them, too, as a humane, brave and gallant Nation should, in a contest of freedom against oppression—and Americans sympathised, as they had done in every struggle for freedom since the days of our glorious revolution. It was our right as men and as citizens, a right we intend to exercise, and a right that cannot be controlled.

Contrary to public sentiment,—contrary to the genius of our free institutions,—contrary to the constitution of our country a law was passed at the last Session of Congress, boldly interfering with those rights, and the common privileges of American citizens, and which it is one of the objects of this meeting to protest against and demand—age demand its repeal. It disgraces our statute book, and our nation. Its characteristics are briefly set forth in the following

### MEMORIAL.

*To the Senate and House of Representatives  
Of the United States in Congress Assembled.*

Your memorialists, citizens of the State of New-York, respectfully represent—

That in the opinion of your memorialists, the Neutrality Law passed at your last session, vests unusual and extraordinary powers in the Executive officers of the Government, of a purely judicial character, and dangerous to the rights of citizens as they are contrary to the express provisions of the Constitution. That giving such judicial powers, unprecedented in character and unparalleled in extent, is an anomaly in our laws, and a dangerous approximation to arbitrary power, and liable to constant and gross abuses. That it is in direct violation of those articles of the Constitution which provide that “The right of the people to be secure “in their persons, houses, papers and effects, against unreasonable “searches and seizures *shall not be violated*, and no warrant shall “issue, but upon probable cause, supported by oath or affirmation, “and particularity describing the place to be searched and the persons or things to be seized.” (4th Article of the Amendments.) And that a citizen cannot be deprived of “Liberty or property without *due process of law*.” (5th do.)

Your memorialists further represent that in open violation of the spirit and letter of these provisions of the Constitution, officers of the General Government have, under pretence of authority given by the law passed last winter, without process or oath,



searched private dwellings, seized private property, arrested and kept in duress our fellow citizens, and in some instances, confiscated private property to public use, and while every aid and assistance has been given to one belligerent party, our citizens have been prevented from holding commerce with the other, by the most oppressive abuse of power, making the action of the government *partial* instead of neutral, and at variance with precedent, with constitutional rights guaranteed to every citizen, with national gratitude, national faith, the expectations of every friend of freedom and republican institutions, and the voice of public opinion.

Your memorialists therefore respectfully ask for the repeal or essential modification of that law.

Why was such a law passed? Shall I tell the reason? I blush to say it was because the British Canadian government demanded it. It is even said the bill was framed at Toronto, and sent to Washington to be passed. However this may be no one doubts that it is precisely such an one as would have been framed there, and we have seen how it has been enforced and its provisions exceeded.

The events of the present season are fresh in all our memories.  
Canada

Has sons that never will be slaves  
While Heaven has light or earth has graves;  
Spirits of fire that brood not long,  
But flash resentment back for wrong;  
And hearts, where slow but deep the seeds  
Of vengeance ripen into deeds;  
Who, though they know the strife is vain—  
Who, though they know the riven chain  
Snaps but to enter in the heart  
Of him who rends its links apart,  
Yet dare the issue—blest to be  
E'en for one bleeding moment free.

Again the fire of revolution, smothered but not subdued, broke out below. Men were in arms to resist an oppressive and grinding tyranny. The mission of Lord Durham had failed—he left the country and on his departure the outbreak commenced. We need not here discuss the rights of the case, nor the wrongs that had driven a people to desperation. By superior numbers and—let Americans blush while they hear it—by the co-operation of American troops, and American steamboats, they were defeated. Hundreds were dragged to prison, and now British ferocity again manifested itself. A military despot

— whom hell had sent  
To spread its blast where'er he went



marched through the disaffected districts, with fire and sword.— Universal license was given to his brutal soldiery, and the most beautiful portions of the lower province were laid waste.

Colborne, like a fiend of desolation, marched at the head of his myrmidons, and rapine and devastation followed in his train.— Women and children despoiled of their goods, were driven forth by the light of their burning homes to the forests, to die of cold and hunger, by the order of this inhuman tyrant. Like the demon of Byron

The softest note that soothed his ear  
Was the sound of a widow sighing,  
And the sweetest sight was the icy tear,  
Which horror froze in the blue eye clear  
Of a maid by her lover lying,  
As round her fell her long fair hair  
And she look'd to Heaven with that frenzied air  
Which seemed to ask if a God were there.

\* \* \* \* \*

And stretched by the wall of a blasted hut  
With its hollow cheek and eyes half shut,  
A child of famine dying.  
And the carnage begun, when resistance was done  
And the fall of the vainly flying.

Close upon this followed the affair at Prescott. A handfull of brave men rallied on that shore to strike another ineffectual blow, and dye martyrs in a holy cause. For days and nights they held the enemy at bay. They showed undaunted courage, but cut off from succour by an overwhelming force on one side, and a neutrality officer on the other, they were forced to surrender. The heroic Von Shoults—the emulator of Kosciusko and La Fayette has perished—ignominiously—yet nobly, for the cause was noble—on the gallows. What would have been the award that heroes would have given him? Not death—nor *such* a death.— A generous foe would have said “We honor your courage and respect your motives. Return to your adopted land and say that Britons have too much love of liberty and too much respect for courage, to punish men who have acted nobly from a mistaken sense of duty.” This would have been noble and generous—but these qualities are not to be expected from the tools of tyranny.

The affair at Sandwich was a similar one, and had a similar result. It is not my object to apologize for either of these rash attempts. It would seem that any one might have predicted the result. We meet not to night, fellow citizens, to discuss Canadian grievances, or describe their ineffectual struggles for freedom. It

is for a purpose which comes home to our own business and bosoms—to our honor, our pride, our character and our independence.

The bloody outrage upon the *Caroline* has been followed by others of a similar character. Our vessels have been repeatedly fired upon—our citizens killed ; or insulted, injured and abused. IncurSIONS have been made into our territory, and our people bullied by British soldiers. Such things are not to be borne with impunity ; they must be atoned for, or they will be avenged.

While such acts as these are tamely submitted to, our government has been engaged in passing laws to restrain the expression of our feelings, and instead of peremptorily demanding redress for outrages, has violated the rights guarantied by the Constitution, to aid England in subduing her ill-fated provinces. Not content with standing neutral in the contest, it has by every means in its power aided tyranny and oppression. Our houses have been searched and our property seized by officers of the government—arrests have been made, and oppressive bail demanded—in numerous instances when there was no violation of law. Vessels have been seized—yes—in one memorable instance—by aid of a British boat and a British crew, and an American officer has taken an American schooner as a prize into a British Port, with American citizens, unlawfully seized, as prisoners. Civil authorities have been set at defiance, and American citizens fired upon by American soldiers ! All this has been done in Detroit and its vicinity, during the past winter.

Shall these things be borne with impunity ? Shall our free thoughts be trammelled, and our rights assailed ? Is the Constitution a mockery and liberty a dream ? Do the people govern, or are we too slaves ? No ! no !—Liberty still is ours. The fires of seventy-six still glow upon our altars. Independence still gleams in characters of living light—and the glorious stripes and stars still float triumphantly upon the breeze of Heaven.

Then, let us never fear to speak and act like freemen, and sons of the brave ! Let our voices be heard in the councils of the nation, and joining with the thousands that speak this day, let the torrent of public opinion roll over the land with the overwhelming force of yonder mighty flood, and let tyrants hear, in the voice of public sentiment, the sublime thunders of a MORAL NIAGARA !































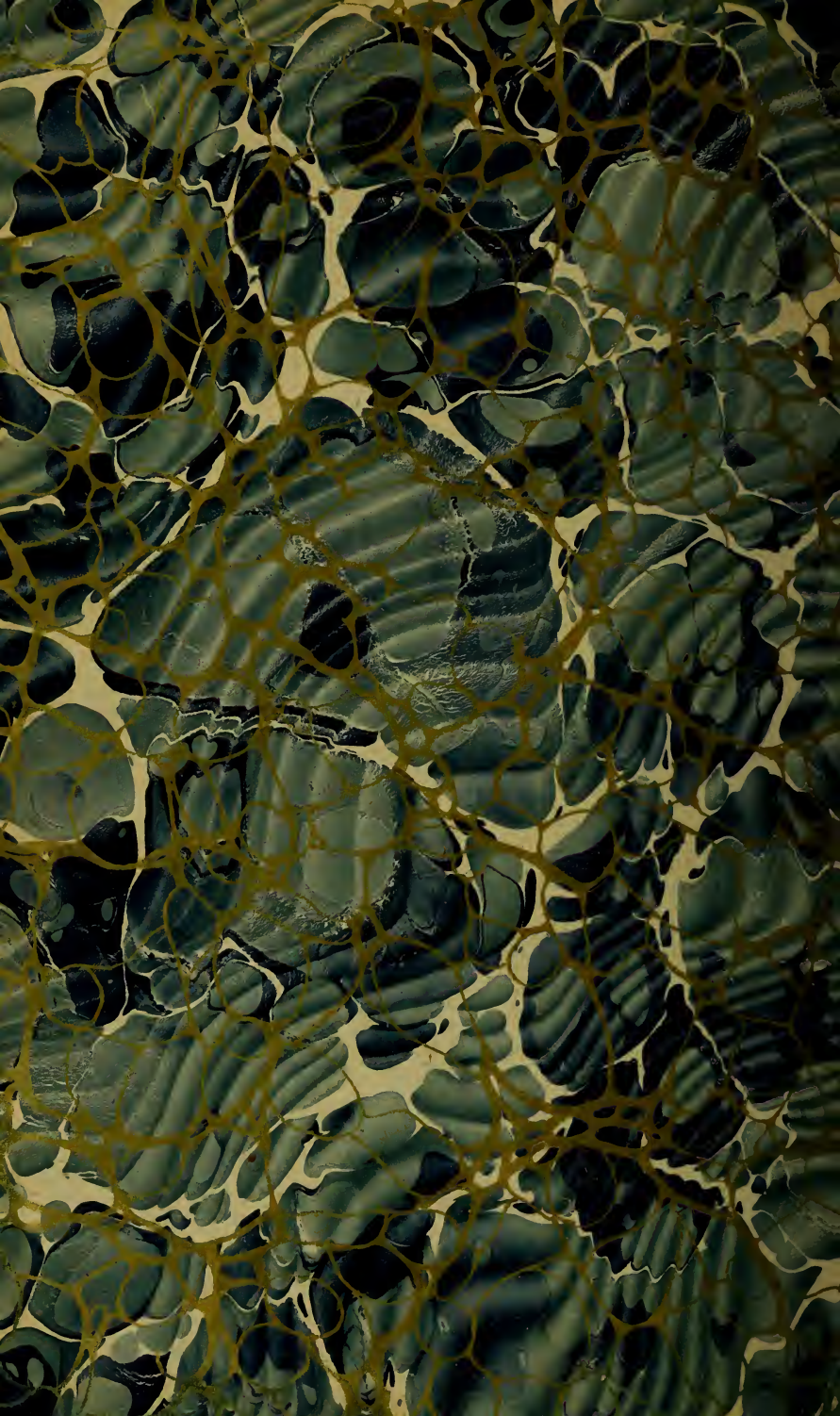






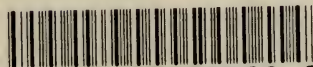
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